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**El Paso County
Agenda Item Details**

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| Item Title: | Parks & Rec / El Paso County Tree Canopy Project / Tornillo, Estrella & Sportpark / FY26 Community Forestry Grants Application |
| Submitted By: | Timothy Fulton, Director |
| Department: | Parks and Recreation |
| Department Phone Number: | 915-771-2380 |
| Subject: | GRANT APPLICATION - Approve and authorize the Parks and Recreation Department to apply for the FY26 Texas A & M Community Forestry, Tree Planting Grant in the amount of \$20,000.00 from October 1, 2025, to September 30, 2026. A \$20,000.00 In-Kind match is required. (Contract No. 2025-0223) |
| Background: | Parks and Rec will be utilizing the grant funding to purchase and plant 155 trees. The trees will be planted using the assistance of volunteers at the following locations: Sports park located at 1780 Zaragoza, a 45.3-acre special use park; Estrella Park, located at 14590 Greg Drive, a 5-acre neighborhood park, and Tornillo Coyote Park, located at 600 OT Smith Road, is a 14.4-acre park. These trees will provide needed shade coverage, help reduce noise pollution, soil erosion, assist with maintaining a healthy ecosystem, and finally fill in the gaps after dead trees have been removed. |
| Fiscal Impact: | Fiscal Impact Historical None. New Grant Fiscal Impact Projected None. In-kind match will be used Long Account Number: Amount: Long Account Number: Amount: |
| Budget or Unbudgeted Match: | \$20,000.00 from In-Kind will be used as match. |
| Recommendation: | GRANT APPLICATION: Approve and authorize the Parks and Recreation Department to apply for the FY26 Texas A & M |

Community Forestry, Tree Planting Grant in the amount of \$20,000.00 from 10/1/2025 to 9/30/2026. A match is required, the department will use \$20,000.00 from In-Kind Match. (Contract No. 2025-0223).

Prior Action:

None. New Grant

Strategic Plan:

Goal:

4. Upgrade Infrastructure

Objective:

4.1 Build infrastructure, including parks, to meet the needs of the community

Strategic Plan Information:

Plant trees to expand the shade coverage square footage for El Paso County.

**Estimated Time Needed
For This Item:**

Community Forestry Grants Sep2024

General Information

Project Title*

Provide a uniquely descriptive and brief title for this project. Use this full title consistently on all submission communications and documents.

El Paso County Parks Shade Coverage Project

Applicant Information ▾

Provide information for the Organization or Entity Applying.

Name of Organization*

El Paso County

Street Address*

500 E. San Antonio

237 /

City*

El Paso

State*

TX

Zip Code*

79901

Mailing Address (if different)

Organization's Federal Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)*

GJJHZSZV

Organization's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)*

74-6000762

Type of Applicant*

Municipality



Utility District



Non-Profit



State Agency



Non-Governmental Organization



Tribal Entity



School District



Higher Education Institution



Community-Based Organization

Partnering Organization*

NONE

Contact Person Information ▾

Provide information for a Contact Person for this project.

Name*

TIM FULTON

Title*

PARKS RECREATION DIRECTOR

Email*

T.FULTON@EPCOUNTY.COM

Phone*

(915) 273-3501

Project Information ▾

Please refer to the Application Worksheet on our webpage for further instructions and clarification.

Project Overview*

Provide a succinct and relevant summary that can be easily understood and clearly communicate the importance of the project. This summary should include project background, location, community need for the project, high level goals, and partnerships.

The El Paso County shade coverage project aims to increase shade coverage in disadvantaged portions of the County; the project aims at removing dead and hazardous trees, planting new trees in their place, and planting trees in barren areas. El Paso County Parks and Rec will be planting 155 trees. Parks and Rec staff will remove any dead trees, and with the assistance of volunteers plant new trees. The following locations: Sports park located at 1780 Zaragoza, a 45.3-acre special use park; Estrella Park, located at 14590 Greg Drive, a 5-acre neighborhood park, and Tornillo Coyote Park, located at 600 OT Smith Road, is a 14.4-acre park were chosen due to large barren areas and the dead trees needed to be removed. One of the three locations is in an unincorporated and more disadvantaged community of El Paso County, all these parks are vital in their neighborhoods. The increase in shade coverage in these areas will directly reduces surface temperatures, help the climate and wildlife.

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Goals and Objectives*

Describe what you plan to accomplish. Context should clearly identify priority landscapes and issues that are the focus of the project. Goals and objectives should be explicitly explained and linked to the specific grant category. Objectives should be realistic, measurable and attainable within the contract period.

The shade coverage directly impacts the cooling effect, and the more excellent the shade coverage, the more pronounced the reduction in heat index. Trees not only provide shade, but are crucial in mitigating the urban heat island effect and significantly lowering temperatures in densely populated areas. Higher shade coverage can dramatically reduce heat stress by lowering the perceived temperature, especially during hot summer days. A significant goal for El Paso County Parks and Recreation is to increase El Paso County's tree canopy by 201,011 sq ft. This grant will aid in bringing the square footage down, and in the process assist with climate change. The parks selected for this grant have larger barren areas and dead trees that need removal. The attached maps show how little vegetation these parks have. El Parks and Rec department also picked these parks due to their proximity to increasing populations. Two of the three locations are in unincorporated areas where access to recreation is key to building community and a sense of belonging. Increasing the shade coverage allows the residents to utilize the parks more often, and enjoy the amenities throughout the year. Trees will be planted during the optimal tree planting time from November to March. The Parks Department will only purchase trees native to the El Paso region will be planted: Chinquapin Oak, Mexican White Oak, Arizona Ash, Raywood Ash, Chinese Pistache, Texas Red Oak, Live Oak, Lacebark Elm, and Western Soapberry. The objectives are to coordinate the preparation of the holes for these trees so that El Paso County equipment can be rotated, and that the trees are planted in succession of one another. The project's success will begin with purchasing the trees and planting all trees in the locations listed above during the optimal planting period.

Proposed Activities*

Clearly describe with specificity, activities to be completed with grant funds and leveraged resources. Link specific project activities to funding amounts in the Project Budget and to stated project goals and objectives. Clearly describe the match fund sources and what their uses will be.

With assistance from the El Paso Volunteer Coordinator, El Paso Parks will plan for several events throughout the tree-planting season from November 2025 to March 2026. The volunteer coordinator will promote these events throughout the county and distribute flyers to the communities surrounding the respective parks. El Paso County events are advertised using social media blasts and mainstream media. In the past, when Parks and Rec had events, they would average between 25 and 50 volunteers per location. In-kind will be used as the match; this will come from the volunteers' time and labor and the use of El Paso County equipment. The amount of volunteers is based on each event's needs. Typically, the event will run about 4 hours, using between 25 and 50 volunteers; this would equal \$ 6,698.00. The equipment will be used to pre-dig the planting holes and install the drip irrigation lines for all locations.

*35 trees will be planted at Sports Park. By planting medium-sized trees at the designated 20 feet apart, these trees will cover 700 sq. ft. The park has large patches of erosion, planting trees will assist in stopping this, improving the soil. The shade from trees will provide needed relief to the many families that utilize the park for the many sports tournaments.

*50 trees will be planted at Estrella Park. Planting 50 medium-sized trees at the designated 20 feet apart will cover 1,000 sq. ft. Trees will provide shade along walk trails and benches. There are 128 dwelling units within 1/4 mile. Recent improvements to the park have made it a hub for the residents in the area, it is lacking in shade coverage.

*70 trees will be planted along the walking trails at Tornillo Coyote Park. Planting 50 medium-sized trees at the designated 20 feet apart, these trees will cover 1,400 sq. ft. This park serves residents of the unincorporated community of Tornillo in far southeastern El Paso County and is directly accessible to 84 dwelling units. Population growth in the unincorporated portions of the county has increased the number of residents who rely on El Paso County to provide access to parks and recreation.

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Deliverables, Timeline, Outputs, Outcomes*

Describe the timeline for this project in detail. Clearly lay out deliverables and outcomes and describe how the selected objectives will lead to measurable outcomes and how the applicant will measure progress towards those outcomes.

- What is the benefit to the community and/or state?
- What need or issue will it solve?
- How visible will it be to the community?
- What is the public relations impact and how will it increase public awareness?
- Will the program or project continue after the grant expires?
- Outline the proposed Timeline for this project. **All funds must be encumbered by December 2027.**

The timeline for this project is as follows: From award to the first three months, follow the El Paso County procurement process to purchase the 155 trees. Start working with the Volunteer Coordinator to create a calendar of events for each park spread out through peak planting time from November to March, coordinate County staff and equipment to ensure all pre-digs are done so that each project can run in succession of each other. Deliverables purchase orders for trees to the vendor. El Paso Parks and Rec department will coordinate delivery or pick-up of the trees from the nursery. Parks director will ensure invoices from vendor are sent to the El Paso County auditors office to ensure timely payment and reimbursement.

Outputs to the communities of these parks will be in increase in shade coverage. Providing residents with a quality of life, to enjoy the amenities that the El Paso County parks have to offer.

Outputs to the wildlife of the surrounding areas where these trees will be planted, giving them an ecosystem that is rich with nutrients.

Outputs to the El Paso County community at large, by planting as many trees as possible, the Parks and Rec department provide increase shade coverage, reduce the heat index, control the soil erosion, and by removing dead trees eliminate the risk of spreading wildfires.

Outcomes, for these trees to mature and expand the shade coverage, thereby reducing the heat index, improving the soil, reducing tinder for wildfires

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Sustainability of Outcomes*

Describe how the project results in outcomes that extend beyond the life of the project itself. Outline a plan for management that will ensure the success of the project long-term. Provide rationale for why dollars invested will sustain project outcomes into the future beyond project end date.

El Paso County administered a poll asking residents what they deemed most important for quality of life; the results were for more covered picnic areas and shaded recreational areas. With the assistance of this grant, El Paso County Parks and Recreation can provide more shaded areas throughout El Paso County. These trees will help with climate change, water quality, and wildlife habitats. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and release oxygen. They store harmful pollutants and greenhouse gases and increase resilience, helping the ecosystems withstand the effects of climate change. These trees will provide food and shelter for wildlife like birds and squirrels and pollinators like bees. They will assist to reduce the soil erosion and improve the soil quality. Most importantly, they will provide shade in the summer.

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Community Need*

The project should include the following elements: A description of the benefiting community. This could include factors such as general characteristics, challenges, and the specific needs faced by the community, such as health, economic, environmental, or social impacts. Data or evidence should support the proposal. Applicants may consider using national tools and datasets or provide more localized information, such as tribal, local, or state data, to describe the populations and conditions that the project aims to benefit. A description of how the project addresses the needs of the targeted communities. This could be social, ecological, or economic benefits and should include:

- An overview of the targeted community and partners engaged in the project; and how they will be impacted by the project.
- Quantitative and qualitative description of how communities will be engaged to participate in/benefit from the project.

Removing dead trees reduces the risk of wildfire especially in dry climates. Dead trees act as fuel for wildfires, they also spread disease to other trees and can harbor pests that can spread to healthy trees, so removing them can help prevent further infection. Finally, in an area with human activity, such as walking trails or sports events, dead trees at risk of falling can pose a safety hazard, making removal necessary. This grant will provide funding to plant new trees that will aid in heat reduction and benefit both the land and the residents of this area.

Residents of the Tornillo Coyote Park area, are a population of 3,638. They have a median home value of \$54,900.00 and the median household income of \$27,870.00, this is low compared to the rest of the country. There is one elementary, two middle schools, and one high school in the area. Tornillo is at the most western point of El Paso County, area residents rely on the recreation parks as part of their way of life. Providing shade coverage will increase their quality of life.

Residents of the Estrella Park area, are a population of 96,353 their median home value is \$127,800.00, however their household income averages \$52,119.00. There are nine elementary schools, four middle schools, and one high school in the surrounding area to the park. The park is utilized by students, families, and residents of the area. This park has had recent improvements done to it, however it lacks adequate shade coverage.

Residents of Sports Park area , are a population of 105,150 their median home value is \$121,700.00, and their household income averages \$52,024.00. There are fifteen elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools in the area, the Sports Park is a regional sport facility, it hosts competitive sports leagues for athletes of all ages from both the surrounding schools and outside of the area. The park is used year around, it lacks substantial shade coverage

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Collaboration*

Proposals should demonstrate use of coordination and partnerships with local or state entities to improve outcomes.

- Describes how the project is collaborative and clearly identifies partners that are actively engaged and add value towards project planning and implementation.
- Cultivates organization of partners around common goals/objectives.

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service - they assist with training volunteers on proper planting techniques. They also assist with tree selection and tree locations. We also use UTEP, EPCC, Ft. Bliss and surrounding school districts to provide volunteers for tree planting events. These groups have been committed to work with the El Paso County Parks and Recreation department in any and all tree planting events.

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